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Dean Logan's Blog

Networking by Military Law Society gets Students “Backstage” at SCOTUS

Posted by David Logan on 04/02/2013 at 11:09 AM

One of the many terrific student groups at RWU Law is the Military Law Society (MilLaw), which recently was a prime example of how engaged students can take advantage of excellent networking opportunities, and yield amazing results. Here’s the story....

Last fall Justice Samuel Alito visited RWU, <http://law.rwu.edu/blog/justice-alito%E2%80%99s-day-campus-v-2> and at one of the many social events 2L Tunde Adepegba struck up a conversation with Martha Ann Alito. It turns out that Mrs. Alito grew up in a military family, and she and Tunde, the President and Founder of MilLaw, had a great conversation that led to an invitation to the group to come to DC, to have a private meeting with Justice Alito and a special tour of the Court.



The session with Justice Alito and MilLaw reps offered a candid look at how the Court deals with high visibility cases (the upcoming gay rights cases were clearly on the Justice’s radar). The Justice spoke about his continuing concern with live cameras in the courtroom, but pointed out that there was a new practice of quick release of both transcripts and tape recordings of major arguments. He also revealed that each justice still gets his (or her) spittoon!



Then the students (with me tagging along) had a very special experience: a backstage tour of the non-public areas of the Court. Among the highlights:

- the hall with the chambers of Justices Ginsberg and Sotomayor
- the drop-dead-beautiful Court library (we just missed bumping into Justice Kennedy on this stop!)
- the justices' lunchroom
- the cubicle where Justice Blackmun "locked himself in" to write the lead opinion in *Roe v. Wade*
- and, the very best: we got to stand at the podium in the well of the Court, just a few feet from the bench where the justices sit, and at the exact spot where stood the great lawyers who argued path-breaking cases like *Brown v. Board*, *Miranda v. Arizona*, and *Gideon v. Wainwright*.



I would be remiss if I did not also include the other treat for the MilLaw students on the trip: a special tour of the Pentagon, arranged by the Secretary of Navy (and my friend, Ray Mabus), which included a private meeting with one of the top lawyers in the armed forces, General Butch Tate. General Tate was warm and approachable, and offered the students tips for building their careers as lawyers: be engaged (something very easy to do at RWU Law, as MilLaw's trip proves!).



